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JAN.

1901.

ANNALS  
OF THE  
AMERICAN ACADEMY  
OF  
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE.

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THE CAUSES OF THE UNPOPULARITY OF THE  
FOREIGNER IN CHINA.<sup>1</sup>

The subject under discussion—the cause of the unpopularity of foreigners in China—is a delicate one for me to handle. When I was asked to come to this meeting and give my views, my first impulse was to keep out of the way as far as possible. The reason did not lie so much in the difficulty of pointing out the causes as in the disagreeable features of the subject. I felt that, no matter how impartial and dispassionate I might be in treating it, I could not help stirring up a hornet's nest, and that, in any event, it would be a thankless task. But, after giving the matter due consideration, and seeing the various reasons given from time to time by different writers and speakers, some of which are correct while others seem to me insufficient, I considered it my duty, in view of the importance of the subject, to do my part in ascertaining the real causes and suggesting remedies for their removal. I felt that I ought not to shirk

<sup>1</sup> Address before the American Academy of Political and Social Science delivered on the evening of November 20, 1900. The other addresses delivered at the same time are summarized in the January *Bulletin* of the Academy.

the task, however unpleasant. So I have come here to-day to speak for myself as a Chinaman who has lived among foreigners and can speak from personal knowledge. I will endeavor to be impartial and just to all parties and not allow prejudice and bias to warp my judgment. My sole aim is to state all the facts and tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

We find that China, in ancient times, was not indisposed to trade and intercourse with the outer world. The foreigners who happened to set foot on Chinese soil in those days came from the neighboring countries in Asia. They traded with the people of China, intermingled freely with the natives, and were considered during their sojourn as Chinese. Thus they gave us no trouble, politically or socially. In fact, they adopted our customs and manners. All accounts agree that they lived peaceably with the natives. On the other hand, the Chinese never manifested any ill-feeling or animosity toward a foreigner who happened to be within their gates. We find this to be one of the injunctions of Confucius, who flourished in the fifth century before Christ: "Be kind to strangers from afar."

Coming down to later times, we find that foreigners in China were treated not only with kindness and consideration but with great respect. Even official posts were open to them. To give you one instance out of many, I will only mention Marco Polo, the celebrated Venetian traveler of the Middle Ages. He visited China in 1274. He was so well received and respected that he obtained an official position under the government. He successively held the offices of privy councilor, assistant envoy and governor of Chihkiang. When he afterwards determined to return to his native country, his popularity was so great that the court was very reluctant to let him go. There is at the mouth of the Canton River in the southern part of China an old temple, known by the name of "Polo Temple." The inhabitants of the neighborhood say that it was dedicated to the

memory of some foreigner. But whether Marco Polo was that foreigner or not, I am not in a position to say. Thus it is apparent that the Chinese people originally were not opposed to the coming of foreigners to their country. Now it is an indisputable fact, as evidenced by the recent deplorable occurrences in North China, that there is a strong feeling against foreigners at the present day. The question is, How has this change come about? In order to find out the causes, we have to go back to the events that have taken place within the last half century. We find that foreigners from the west, though they were mostly honorable men, did not belong to the same class of persons as we had been accustomed to deal with. They came to China with their goods and wanted trade. They were different in color, in race, and in language. They did not observe our customs and manners. No sooner had they made their fortunes than they left China for good. Under these circumstances, it was natural that difficulties and disputes should often arise from misunderstanding, which, unfortunately, resulted in warfare.

It is not my purpose here to go into the causes which led to one war after another. Nor do I wish to be understood to say that China was always in the right. It is not to be expected that a nation which had lived in seclusion for centuries and had not learned the art of war as practiced at the present day, or the use of the modern engines of destruction, could come out of the struggle with any other than disadvantageous results. When the treaty of peace was made, China had to give her consent to many stipulations and conditions, granting extraordinary privileges to foreigners, not to mention the heavy indemnities she had to pay to the other side for the cost of every war. I do not, however, blame the western nations for resorting to force. No doubt, they had some provocation. But supposing you were in the position of the Chinese people, would you, after such an experience, bear no ill-feeling but still entertain friendly sentiments, toward those who had thus treated you? This,

gentlemen, is one of the causes that have made foreigners so unpopular in China. It should be remembered that, speaking generally, the Chinese have no intimate knowledge of foreigners, who all dress alike, and speak languages they do not understand; accordingly, they treat all foreigners alike.

It has been commonly supposed that missionaries are the sole cause of anti-foreign feeling in China, and that they are to be held responsible for the late uprising. I believe that this charge against them as a body is unfair. Before going any further, I wish to state that the missionaries in China, some of whom I know personally, are, with a few exceptions, respectable and honorable men. They have done a great deal of good in China by translating useful works into the Chinese language, and by publishing scientific and educational journals, which give valuable information to those Chinese who do not understand any foreign language. They have also established some schools in the country and thus advanced the cause of education. The medical missionaries especially have been remarkably successful in their philanthropic work. They have established free hospitals and dispensaries, and dispensed medicine to poor sick Chinese. In time of famine they have been foremost and active in affording relief to the distressed. In short, it is difficult to estimate the amount of good work done in educational and other lines by these good men and women.

On the other hand, we must not be blind to the fact that some of their brethren in their excessive zeal to convert Chinese to their faith have been indiscreet in their conduct. In order to get as many converts as possible, they have not been very particular in their examination of candidates who presented themselves for admission to church membership. They have not been careful in excluding those who wished to join the church with some other object in view than the laudable one of becoming true Christians. Frequently a Chinese asks that he be admitted to a church because by so

doing he hopes to secure foreign protection. Thus instances are not wanting of missionaries interfering in the administration of justice in Chinese courts, and using their influence to secure a favorable decision for their converts. Chinese officials naturally deem such interference on the part of missionaries in disputes or suits between purely Chinese subjects as an attempt to dictate the course of judicial procedure. I do not here refer to the merits of those cases in which Chinese converts are interested. Perhaps the native Christians have good cause for complaint. But the fact that the missionaries plead for one of the litigants naturally gives offence to the non-Christian Chinese on the other side. Hence another cause of unpopularity of foreigners among the Chinese.

By treaty, missionaries have a right to go to any part of China and reside there for the purpose of propagating their religious doctrines,—a right not possessed by other foreigners in China. Now foreigners in China reside in the treaty ports open to foreign trade, and the Chinese who live in those ports have an opportunity to come in contact with them. But in the interior, the general mass of the people very seldom see a foreigner. When a missionary comes among them, it can be easily understood that he cannot but excite a great deal of curiosity.

The other day I noticed in the *Century Magazine* an account of Dr. Crawford's experience as a missionary in the interior of China. He has been residing in that country with his wife for a half century. It is stated that when he first came to China to preach the gospel, he considered it hardly compatible with the dignity of an American citizen to adopt the Chinese dress, as the Western garb appeared to him an advantage in his mission, more liable to attract the attention and respect of the population in the different places he visited. In fact, no effort was needed to get an audience together, for great crowds usually collected about him, anxious to learn what the tall stranger with the

stovepipe hat, narrow trousers and leather boots had to say. But hardly had he begun to preach to them in their own language than they became bolder, investigated the cut of his coat and trousers, felt the materials between their fingers, touched his boots, and interrupted him continually with all sorts of questions—how the leather boots were put on and off, where he got the trousers, how much the materials cost and where he had learned their language. Tired of these continual interruptions, he at last determined to satisfy the curiosity of his listeners from the very outset. Arriving in the next village, he addressed the crowd assembled about him as follows: “Brothers, I hail from America; my trousers are made of wool stuff, to be got at Shanghai for two ‘tiao’ per yard; my boots are made of calf-skin, and are put on in the same way as the socks you are wearing; your language I acquired in Peking, and I have come to tell you about the true God,” etc. This, however, satisfied the audience but little. They waited patiently until he had finished, and then, they again began questioning him about his trousers. Finally he became convinced that it was by far the best policy to adopt the Chinese dress, and for nearly fifty years he has worn no other. This shows the curiosity with which foreigners are regarded by the Chinese.

In every country foreigners with their distinctive national dress venturing into the unfrequented regions of the interior naturally attract the gaze and excite the curiosity of the natives. I am glad that some of the missionaries have adopted the Chinese dress, which, in my humble opinion, is more comfortable than any other. There are many others, however, who retain their national costume in China. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the missionaries, especially those who still retain their own national dress, to exercise the utmost discretion and caution not only in what they say but also in what they do. When persons of this character, in their peculiar position, preach a foreign doctrine in the interior, publicly condemning the cherished traditions of China,

proclaiming the worship of ancestors and idols to be a useless performance, and saying to their hearers that they must discard such practices and embrace the only true religion, as they call it, or else they will be condemned to everlasting fire—put yourselves in the position of the Chinese people, and you will have no difficulty in understanding their feeling under such circumstances ! Is it unnatural that such actions should create unfavorable impressions among the natives with regard to foreigners ? I do not blame the missionaries for their activity in preaching the gospel. It is their profession. Nor do I blame them for residing in the interior, because they are there in accordance with treaty stipulations. I only wish to point out the peculiar and delicate position in which these good men are placed. Some of them, no doubt, have been successful in their work without encountering much opposition. But in this world all men are not cautious and discreet, and missionaries are not exceptions to this rule.

The general attitude of foreigners toward the Chinese has had a great deal to do with the opinion and feeling entertained by the natives toward them. The Chinese are a receptive people and extremely susceptible of impressions and influences. They are not apt to forget either a favor or an injury. The former excites in their breast as much gratitude as the latter resentment. In case of an injury, though they may not retaliate, their feeling against the offender is none the less strong. This, I suppose, is human nature, which is the same the world over. The Chinese in this respect are following the precept of Confucius, who has taught them to “ requite injury with justice and kindness with kindness.” I confess that this is not so noble and grand as the Christian doctrine, “ Love your enemies ; bless them that curse you ; do good to them that hate you.” But this doctrine is so noble and grand that no weak and frail mortal, at least in our generation, has been able to attain to it. I am afraid that it has become a dead letter. At any



rate, I cannot recall from my limited experience a single person or nation that has ever acted up to that precept. Let us now examine the attitude of foreigners toward the natives in China. This is a delicate subject. Still, if you wish to know the truth, it is necessary to touch upon it, though the task is by no means a pleasant one. All foreigners in China enjoy special advantages and rights accorded to them by treaty. They do not come to the country by sufferance, but have a right to come and reside therein. Moreover, they carry with them the laws of their respective countries. The local authorities have no jurisdiction over them. They are only subject to the control of the officials of their own country. The natural consequence is that foreigners form a sort of privileged class with peculiar rights and advantages, which are denied to the natives, and, by reason of their freedom from local control, consider themselves as superior beings—more as lords of the country than as strangers in a strange land.

When they find the customs and manners of the country different from those to which they have been accustomed, they not only disregard them but often do not refrain from expressing their opinions in the most offensive way. The long-cherished traditions and institutions of the country are frequently treated by them with contempt. In this way they excite the ill-feeling of the natives. Moreover, their conduct toward the Chinese is, in other respects, by no means exemplary. Take, for instance, their business intercourse with the natives. Chinese merchants who go to foreign houses to give orders for goods have not always met with the courtesies and civilities due to men of their position. Instances are not wanting of customers being treated with positive rudeness. I am glad to find that such conduct has not been so noticeable in recent years. Again, the general mass of the people receive scant courtesy at the hands of foreigners. If you go to China and stay at any of the treaty ports, you will often see Chinese coolies caned and kicked

in the streets by foreigners without the least provocation. The beating of chair coolies and servants is also a matter of daily occurrence. I do not mean to say that the lower classes of Chinese do not sometimes try a man's patience, but the frequent infliction of corporal punishment by foreigners upon unoffending Chinese is what no fair-minded man would approve. Ill-considered acts of this kind are talked about, and greatly embitter the feelings of the natives against foreigners.

It is but fair to mention that there are foreigners in China, and these are not few, who treat the natives with every consideration and fairness, and entirely disapprove of the high-handed proceedings of other foreigners. For these good men I have nothing but words of gratitude and praise. But, unfortunately, the mischief done by the thoughtless and inconsiderate has more than counterbalanced the favorable impression created by them.

In this connection, I cannot help adverting to the character of the foreign press in China. Its general tone is calculated to set the whole Chinese nation against foreigners and things foreign. Take up any foreign newspaper published in China, and you will find that columns are devoted in almost every issue to denouncing the Chinese Government and its officials and condemning everything which the people hold dear and sacred. Far be it from me to assert that all Chinese officials are men of immaculate character. I admit that in China, as in every other country, some of the officials are unworthy of public trust. But the foreign newspapers in China lead one to believe that the Chinese Government is nothing but a sham ; that the officials are all scoundrels ; that the people are ground down by fearful oppression. It seems to be their settled policy to pick flaws in everything the Chinese do and begrudge even the small crumb of justice which is their due. If our government should adopt a certain policy, the motive for such a course would be sure to be misconstrued. If the provincial authorities should take

a certain step, even the best intentions would be distorted into something nefarious. The recent unfortunate uprising in China is a god-send to writers for the foreign press. It unfortunately furnishes them with just the kind of material for blackguarding the government and the people of China without stint. We Chinese representatives abroad, as well as many high officials and intelligent Chinese, deplore as deeply and denounce as strongly as does any foreigner the frightful atrocities recently perpetrated. It should be remembered that the violence of the Tientsin and Peking mobs was not directed against foreigners alone, but also against a large portion of their own countrymen. The number of pro-foreign Chinese, especially Cantonese, who lost their lives, families, property and all during those terrible days of mob rule was far greater than that of foreign victims. But since that lamentable outbreak, the Chinese people have been overwhelmed with obloquy and held up to the execration of the world without exception. The crimes committed by the Boxers are imputed to the machinations of the whole nation. Even the diplomatic representatives of China abroad have not escaped the general condemnation, but have been treated as *participes criminis*. Dr. Morrison, a correspondent of the *London Times* in Peking, went so far as to charge my colleague in London, Sir Chihchen Lofengluh, and myself with barefaced mendacity in his telegraphic despatches. Here is a characteristic extract from one of his despatches:

“The most profound indignation is felt here (Peking) that Ministers Lo Fengluh and Wu Ting-fang, whose shameless lies and transmission of bogus Imperial Edicts delayed the departure of relief until it was nearly too late, are still received with honor in London and Washington.”

I do not pretend to know the feeling of the besieged foreigners at Peking. But if Dr. Morrison voices the general sentiment, it only shows to what extreme people will sometimes go in indiscriminate condemnation. I can very

well understand how men and women, after being subjected to tremendous mental and bodily strain continually for a couple of months, may lose their equanimity and let their temper get the better of their judgment. Unless I am greatly mistaken, I do not, however, believe that a majority of the foreigners, who have been so cruelly confined in Peking, and with whom I deeply sympathize, entertain such profound indignation against Sir Chihchen and me as has been alleged by Dr. Morrison. I am led to this opinion, because I am told that Dr. Morrison is not always careful in his assertions, he having, some years ago, slandered the missionaries in China without just cause. When Dr. Morrison's absurd statement first appeared in the newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic, my colleague and myself immediately gave a flat denial. It is too charitable to expect a public apology from Dr. Morrison. But it seems to me quite extraordinary that the London *Times* should have not only ignored our reply, but even repeated in a late issue of that paper the charge of "shameless mendacity" against me without a tittle of proof. This clearly shows the prejudice of that journal. I know that a public man is liable to all insidious attacks and ought not to be too thin-skinned. As for myself, I hope to be able to live down all slanders of this kind. But the general mass of the Chinese people are not of so philosophical a turn of mind. When they see such sweeping attacks upon their country, their public men, their traditions and their institutions made by the foreign newspapers in China, is it a wonder that they entertain anything but a friendly feeling toward their slanderers?

I should like to mention that I and those Chinese who have a knowledge of some foreign language, as a rule, stand up for the foreigners in China, and for this reason we are generally regarded with suspicion by many of our conservative countrymen. It is rather disheartening for us to find that while incurring their displeasure, we have still to run the gauntlet not only of foreign criticism but also of foreign

slander. This seems like jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

Events of recent years in China have done much to increase the bitter feeling already existing between the Chinese and the foreigners. The seizure of territory without proper compensation ; the forcible taking of lands from their Chinese owners, who have been in continuous possession from time immemorial ; the rough treatment received by those acting in defence of their rights, sometimes resulting in bloodshed—these have added fuel to the flame and contributed to the unpopularity of foreigners among the Chinese. In saying this, I do not wish to convey the impression that the Chinese are entirely free from blame. They are at fault in that they generally are over-suspicious of foreigners and do not study and appreciate the good points possessed by them. They have clung stubbornly to their old conservatism and remained content with the existing condition of things and unwilling to learn from the outside world. Many of them still think that the ancient civilization, which has existed for centuries, is still good for China in our day and generation, without any change to meet the requirements of modern life. If the Chinese had done as their enterprising neighbors, the Japanese, have done, they would doubtless stand higher to-day in the estimation of the world.

Now the question naturally arises, what are the remedies for this unsatisfactory state of things? I will endeavor to answer it to the best of my ability. First of all, foreigners should show more consideration for the feelings of the natives than they have done heretofore. Chinese customs and manners are not necessarily bad, because they happen to be different from the customs and manners of the peoples of the West. Foreign ways are not always the best. I would advise foreigners in China to be more sparing in their condemnation of things Chinese and to try to understand the people better. If they should observe anything that is really objectionable, they ought rather to use gentle

arguments. Let them remember that sweeping denunciations of other people's ways serve only to stir up ill-feeling and antagonism, and do not carry conviction with them.

In the next place, foreigners, in their intercourse with Chinese officials, merchants and educated men, should remember that true politeness is the same in China as in Europe or America. Chinese etiquette may appear at first sight too complicated for the Western mind; but at the bottom of it lies a tenderness for the feelings of others,—an idea which, I am sure, even the dumbest mind can grasp. Above all, foreigners in China should not treat all Chinese with whom they come in contact as inferior to them in intellect or education and unworthy of their society, but should show their friendly feeling, which will no doubt be reciprocated. They should live among the people of the country and not keep themselves apart as being above them.

In the third place, the foreign newspapers in China, which are all owned and published by Europeans, should assume a more conciliatory tone toward the government and people of China. Many Chinese can read foreign papers. If the foreign press award honor and praise to whom honor and praise are due, these intelligent men will tell their countrymen that foreigners are, after all, not unfair or unjust. With regard to missionaries, since they have treaty rights to reside in the interior, it is not to be expected that they will give up such rights. These men have it in their power to create either a good or bad impression upon the natives as regards foreigners. As I have said before, they have, on the whole, done a great deal of good in China. I hope that, after this, missionary societies in this country and in Europe will send out to China only first-class men who have proved themselves to be men of intelligence, tact and discretion, and will weed out those who are impulsive, hot-tempered and indiscreet. It would contribute greatly to the success of the Christian cause if only medical missionaries were sent to China. These men and women while they are quietly

dispensing medicines and healing diseases, can do a great deal toward enlisting the good-will and sympathy of the natives. If this is impracticable, I should like to see the non-medical missionaries establish schools and libraries for the advancement of Western learning and knowledge and of Western arts and sciences. This would be a means of getting the educated class on their side.

In conclusion, foreigners in China should not judge us according to their own standards. They should take account of both our good and our bad points, and give us credit for the former while making due allowance for the latter. Above all, they should assume a more conciliatory attitude in their intercourse with the natives, so as to overcome their distrust and hostility. It is unpleasant to be compelled to criticise other people. I do so now not in a carping spirit. My aim is to remove difficulties, create harmony, and increase the friendliness between China and other nations. The history of China's intercourse with Western nations has been a continuous chapter of misunderstanding. Mistakes have been committed on both sides. What has been done cannot be undone. But let us profit by our past experience and avoid similar mistakes in the future. My earnest hope is that there will be less friction and more cordiality and friendliness between the natives and foreigners. If what I have said will contribute, in any measure, however small, to that desired end, I shall feel amply repaid.

WU TING-FANG.

*Chinese Embassy, Washington.*